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# U.S. belatedly joins search for ex-Nazis

NEW YORK (AP) — After decades of seeming apathy about reports of alleged World War II criminals living quietly in America, government activity against suspected Nazis or their collaborators is at an all-time high.

The Justice Department is investigating 200 cases as well as conducting a separate inquiry into reports that U.S. intelligence agents shielded Klaus Barbie, head of the Gestapo in Nazi-occupied Lyon, France, after the war in exchange for his help in espionage against the Soviet Union.

The General Accounting Office, the investigative arm of Congress, has launched its own probe of the postwar relationship between American intelligence agencies and certain Nazis, including Barbie.

The investigations come at a time when public sentiment in this country favors action against alleged war criminals — a marked change from the past.

"We're definitely coming in late," said Allan A. Ryan, head of the Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations.

"As a result, we're probably the most active country right now. But that's a dubious distinction. Other

countries did this work 20 to 30 years ago."

Ryan is on leave from the OSI to head the Barbie investigation. The OSI seeks alleged Nazi war criminals in the United States and moves to deport them on immigration violations. Those who are U.S. citizens first must be stripped of their citizenship.

The alleged Nazi collaborators being prosecuted by OSI are believed to have slipped into the country in the late 1940s and early 1950s. But the allegations about Barbie, implicating high-level U.S. officials, have raised troubling questions.

After initial resistance, Attorney General William French Smith agreed to have Justice investigate the Barbie affair. Barbie has been convicted in absentia in France twice in connection with the deaths, torture or deportation of 11,000 Jews and French resistance fighters during the war.

Ryan said he intends to examine whether the Army Counterintelligence Corps worked with Barbie, whether U.S. officials shielded him from French authorities after the war and whether the U.S. government had any relationship with him after he fled to Bolivia.

"It's immense," John Tipton, a GAO senior evaluator, said of the GAO project, while declining to discuss details.

Forty years after the war, the OSI has denaturalization cases pending against 13 East European-born U.S. citizens suspected of having concealed past collaboration with the Nazis. The defendants would lose their citizenship if the government proves they hid past activities when immigrating.

The OSI also has deportation cases pending against nine resident aliens and six former citizens who already have been denaturalized. Four other cases were closed after the defendants died.

Ryan says about 200 cases are under investigation, although many never may result in charges.

Two former citizens — a native Romanian and a native Ukrainian — now await deportation, the first people to be ordered out of the United States for Nazi activity.

Valerian Trifa, 68, a Romanian Orthodox bishop in Grass Lake, Mich., and Feodor Fedorenko, 75, a retired factory worker living in the Philadelphia area, were found by U.S. courts to have hidden past activities as Nazi collaborators when they came to the United States.

A third deportation case is nearly completed. Hans J. Lipschis, a Lithuanian-born citizen of West Germany, agreed to deportation last Dec. 23 and said he would return to Germany by April 21.

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